

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 9, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

Thank you for your leadership in our nation's efforts to combat the ongoing drug overdose crisis that is ravaging our communities, from coast-to-coast. While much of the attention has been correctly focused on the role of opioids and especially fentanyl, we are writing today to underscore the devastating role that methamphetamines, other illicit stimulants and alcohol are playing in the crisis.

In 2017, when the current opioid Public Health Emergency (PHE)¹ was first declared, the total number of overdose deaths was about 71,000.² In just the past few years, exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, the number of drug overdose deaths climbed rapidly to over 100,000.³ Importantly, as correctly noted by the Administration, the overdose emergency has evolved into a "polydrug landscape."⁴ It is time to update the opioid PHE to reflect the current state of what is now an overdose public health emergency by expanding it to include all substance use disorders, including alcohol and stimulants such as methamphetamines.

This past summer in Manteca, California, 182 pounds of illicit methamphetamines were seized during just one traffic stop.⁵ While this is an enormous amount of drugs, it is a fraction of what is pouring into our country.⁶ This massive flow of illicit methamphetamines is taking a terrible toll on American families. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), overdose deaths due to illicit methamphetamines have more than doubled from 2016 to 2019, and during the most recent 12-month period for which data are available, the number of methamphetamine-related overdose deaths has increased by an additional 46%.⁷

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Emergency.

<https://www.phe.gov/emergency/news/healthactions/phe/Pages/opioids.aspx> October 26, 2017.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, *Provisional drug overdose death counts*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>). (accessed January 25, 2022).

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Overdose Prevention Strategy*. (<https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/overdose-prevention-strategy>) (January 25, 2022).

⁵ CBS Sacramento. 182 Pounds Of Meth Seized After Highway 99 Traffic Stop Near Manteca. July 26, 2021. <https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2021/07/28/hwy-99-manteca-meth-bust-182-pounds/>

⁶ DEA. (2020). National Drug Threat Assessment, p. 18. Accessed at: https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/DIR-008-21%202020%20National%20Drug%20Threat%20Assessment_WEB.pdf (February 24, 2022).

⁷ Han, B., Compton, W.M., Jones, C.M., Einstein, E.B. and Volkow, N.D., 2021. Methamphetamine use, methamphetamine use disorder, and associated overdose deaths among US adults. *JAMA psychiatry*, 78(12), pp.1329-1342.

More importantly, according to the CDC, methamphetamines and other stimulants play a role in nearly half of all the overdose deaths that are associated with fentanyl.⁸ The CDC also reports that alcohol is responsible for over 95,000 deaths every year⁹ and the National Institutes of Health show that alcohol is involved in more than one-fifth of all prescription opioid deaths.¹⁰

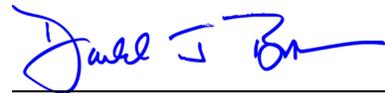
Americans can surmount any challenge that comes our way, but we must first accurately define the problem. The current overdose crisis is driven by not just opioids, but stimulants (especially methamphetamines) and alcohol as well, and we urge you to incorporate these substances into the PHE when it is renewed.

We greatly appreciate the Administration's efforts on behalf of the people, families and communities who are caught in this crisis, and we look forward to working with you to bring it to an end.

Sincerely,



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

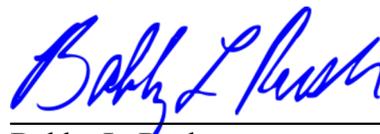
⁸ CDC. Trends in and Characteristics of Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyls — United States, 2019–2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7050e3.htm> . December, 17, 2021.

⁹ CDC. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Deaths and Years of Potential Life Lost From Excessive Alcohol Use—United States, 2011–2015, July 31, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6930a1-H.pdf>

¹⁰ NIH, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Alcohol Facts and Statistics. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/alcohol-facts-and-statistics> (accessed February 22, 2022).



Frank J. Mrvan
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



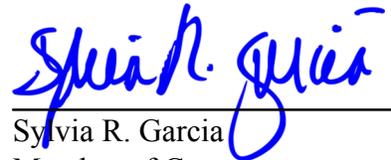
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress